
Week 10, “Milk and Honey”

Discussion Questions

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Old Testament

1. **Numbers 5:11-31** describes a complicated procedure to deal with the situation in which a jealous husband suspected his wife of adultery, but had no proof. If there was no proof, why is the matter even considered?
2. Why did the Israelites refuse to go into the land of Canaan after Caleb and the other spies brought back their report? **Numbers 13:30-14:4.**

New Testament

1. When Jesus was taken to be crucified, “they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, *’The place of a skull.’* They offered him wine mixed with myrrh to drink, but he didn’t take it.” Why was Jesus offered this drink, and why did He refuse it? **Mark 15:22**
2. Why did Jesus say, *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”* which is, being interpreted, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”* **Mark 15:33-37.**

Notes and Commentary

Old Testament

Numbers 5:11-31 describes a complicated procedure to deal with the situation in which a jealous husband suspected his wife of adultery, but had no proof. If there was no proof, why is the matter even considered?

This procedure may seem arbitrary and unfair in several respects. For one thing, it applies only as to a husband’s jealous suspicions as to the wife; and not the suspicions of the wife toward the husband. Our modern American jurisprudence generally requires “probable cause” to determine whether a search, or an arrest, is warranted. It is also used by grand juries to determine whether to issue an indictment. Guilt for conviction must generally be proved “beyond reasonable doubt.” Mere “suspicion” is insufficient to bring judicial proceedings in an American court.

The procedure outlined in Numbers 5:11-31 is another case in which the historical context plays an important role in understanding one of God’s rules. Specifically, God knew that distrust and suspicion could undermine a marriage, and by extension the entire family. It also gave the wife a way to prove her innocence. In the ancient Hebrew society, the likely result of unresolved suspicion could be destruction of the family unit.

[Jamieson Fausset Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (1871)] This law was given both as a strong discouragement to conjugal infidelity on the part of a wife, and a sufficient protection of her from the consequences of a hasty and groundless suspicion on the part of the husband. His suspicions, however, were sufficient in the absence of witnesses (Le 20:10) to warrant the trial described; and the course of proceeding to be followed was for the jealous husband to bring his wife unto the priest with an offering of barley meal, because none were allowed to approach the sanctuary empty handed (Ex 23:15). On other occasions, there were mingled with the offering, oil which signified joy, and frankincense which denoted acceptance (Ps 141:2). But on the occasion referred to, both these ingredients were to be excluded, partly because it was a solemn appeal to God in distressing circumstances, and partly because it was a sin offering on the part of the wife, who came before God in the character of a real or suspected offender.

[Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament (1864)] As any suspicion cherished by a man against his wife, that she either is or has been guilty of adultery, whether well-founded or not, is sufficient to shake the marriage connection to its very roots, and to undermine, along with marriage, the foundation of the civil commonwealth, it was of the greatest importance to guard against this moral evil, which was so utterly irreconcilable with the holiness of the people of God, by appointing a process in harmony with the spirit of the theocratical law, and adapted to bring to light the guilt or innocence of any wife who had fallen into such suspicion, and at the same time to warn fickle wives against unfaithfulness. This serves to explain not only the introduction of the law respecting the jealousy-offering in this place, but also the general importance of the subject, and the reason for its being so elaborately described.

[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible] This law would make the women of Israel watch against giving cause for suspicion. On the other hand, it would hinder the cruel treatment such suspicions might occasion. It would also hinder the guilty from escaping, and the innocent from coming under just suspicion. When no proof could be brought, the wife was called on to make this solemn appeal to a heart-searching God. No woman, if she were guilty, could say "Amen" to the adjuration, and drink the water after it, unless she disbelieved the truth of God, or defied his justice. The water is called the bitter water, because it caused the curse. Thus sin is called an evil and a bitter thing. Let all that meddle with forbidden pleasures, know that they will be bitterness in the latter end.

Why did the Israelites refuse to go into the land of Canaan after Caleb and the other spies brought back their report?

Read Numbers 13:21-14:4.

[Wesley¹] Thus they question the power, and truth, and goodness of God, of all which they had such ample testimonies.

[Kretzmann²] Thus the exaggerations of the cowards rose to a climax in this last extravagant statement, their purpose being to fill the hearts of all the people with the same senseless fear which possessed their own hearts. "Truly an expressive type of the lying fear with which worldly-mindedness has ever depicted the difficult approaches to the kingdom of God." Matters have reached an unfortunate stage in the Church when the men who are called to be the leaders of the congregations lose courage and dread the battle with

¹John Wesley's Notes on the Bible

²Popular Commentary of the Bible (1924), by PAUL E. KRETZMANN, M.A., PhD., B.D., instructor at Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn.

the powers of darkness. But God always has some witnesses and servants that encourage His people and promise certain victory by the help of the Lord.

[**Matthew Henry**³] It is a wonder how the people of Israel had patience to stay forty days for the return of their spies, when they were just ready to enter Canaan, under all the assurances of success they could have from the divine power, and a constant series of miracles that had hitherto attended them; but they distrusted God's power and promise, and were willing to be held in suspense by their own counsels, rather than be brought to a certainty by God's covenant. How much do we stand in our own light by our unbelief! Well, at length the messengers return, but they agree not in their report.

New Testament

When Jesus was taken to be crucified, "they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, 'The place of a skull.' They offered him wine mixed with myrrh to drink, but he didn't take it." Why was Jesus offered this drink, and why did He refuse it? Mark 15:22

[**John S. C. Abbott and Jacob Abbott Illustrated New Testament (1878)**] It is supposed that this was a medicated drink, given to blunt sensibility to pain.

[**The New John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible**] Jesus had said he would drink no more of the fruit of the vine till he drank it new in his Father's kingdom.

Matthew 26:27-29 (WEB). [27] He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, "All of you drink it, [28] for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins. [29] *But I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom.*"

[**Barnes' New Testament Notes**] *Verse 23. Wine mingled, etc.* Matthew says, *vinegar*. It was probably wine soured, so that it might be called either. This was the common drink of the Roman soldiers.

[**Kretzmann Popular Commentary**] It was the custom to give to the condemned some potion which would tend to deaden the sensibilities, a mixture of wine, or vinegar, with myrrh or gall. But Jesus refused this drink; He wanted to endure His sufferings with full consciousness.

[**The Fourfold Gospel and Commentary on Acts of Apostles**] This mixture of sour wine mingled with gall and myrrh was intended to dull the sense of pain of those being crucified or otherwise severely punished. The custom is said to have originated with the Jews and not with the Romans. Jesus declined it because it was the Father's will that he should suffer. He would not go upon the cross in a drugged, semi-conscious condition.

Why did Jesus say, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

MARK 15:33-37 (WEB). [33] *When the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. [34] At the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" [35] Some of those who stood by, when they heard it, said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." [36] One ran, and filling a sponge full of vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave it to him to*

³Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible

drink, saying, "Let him be. Let's see whether Elijah comes to take him down." [37] Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit.

[Life Application Bible⁴] Jesus did not ask this question in surprise or despair. He was quoting the first line of Psalm 22. The whole psalm is a prophecy expressing the deep agony of the Messiah's death for the world's sin. Jesus knew he would be temporarily separated from God the moment he took upon himself the sins of the world. This separation was what he dreaded as he prayed in Gethsemane. The physical Agony was horrible, but the spiritual alienation from God was the ultimate torture.⁵

[Barclay⁶] There is a mystery behind that cry which we cannot penetrate. Maybe it was like this. Jesus had taken this life of ours upon him. He had done our work and faced our temptations and borne our trials. He had suffered all that life could bring. He had known the failure of friends, the hatred of foes, the malice of enemies. He had known the most searing pain that life could offer. Up to this moment Jesus had gone through every experience of life except one—he had never known the consequence of sin. Now if there is one thing sin does, it separates us from God. It puts between us and God a barrier like an unscalable wall. That was the one human experience through which Jesus had never passed, because he was without sin.

It may be that at this moment that experience came upon him—not because he had sinned, but because in order to be identified completely with our humanity he had to go through it. In this terrible, grim, bleak moment Jesus really and truly identified himself with the sin of man. Here we have the divine paradox—Jesus knew what it was to be a sinner. And this experience must have been doubly agonizing for Jesus, because he had never known what it was to be separated by this barrier from God.

That is why he can understand our situation so well. That is why we need never fear to go to him when sin cuts us off from God. Because he has gone through it, he can help others who are going through it. There is no depth of human experience which Christ has not plumbed.

Random Quotes

If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail

—Abraham Maslow, US Philosopher and Psychologist, (1908-1970)

"Fiction writing is great, you can make up almost anything."

— Ivana Trump

Notes:

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⁴Life Application Bible, New Revised Standard Version (Iowa Falls, Iowa: World Bible Publishers, Inc., 1989.)

⁵This separation from God is a foreshadowing of Hell, where the extreme physical torment will be exceeded by the torture of spiritual alienation from God.

⁶The Daily Study Bible Series, Revised Edition, Translated with an Introduction and Interpretation by William Barclay, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia Copyright (1975)